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Does There Need to be a Distinction between “Content for Courses” and “Content for Libraries”?

by **Liz Mason** (Vice President, Gale Product, Gale | Cengage, Farmington Hills, MI 48331; Phone: 248-699-8861) <liz.mason@cengage.com>

How is Library Content Currently Used in the Classroom?

In 2015, **Gale** conducted a survey¹ with *Library Journal* to better understand the relationship between academic faculty and librarians. We knew from the onset there were disconnects between librarians and faculty, but the survey (of roughly 500 academic librarians and 500 faculty) revealed just how big the gap is. The numbers themselves are eye-opening — roughly one quarter (27%) of faculty think there is no need for campus librarians and faculty to consult one another. Just over half of faculty actually reach out to librarians when planning course reserves and acquisitions to support curricular needs. So it's no surprise that faculty also rated their library low on the development of collections in support of course curricula.

Numbers aside, some of the most interesting feedback came from the open-ended, anonymous responses we got from both librarians and faculty. One faculty respondent said all faculty need “is quick and easy access to Google Scholar” and felt that “all the other databases and search engines that the library develops are inessential.”

Up against perception challenges like this, it's clear academic libraries need to continually show faculty and administrators how they support better learning outcomes. One specific way libraries can do this is by showing how the content they do have in the library can directly support in-class instruction and discussion.

It's easy to say content is curriculum-aligned, but that doesn't mean it was developed for course use. At **Gale**, we believe the best way to bring the library from the background to the forefront of learning in the classroom is to rethink how we design library products from the start. Our strategic philosophy is that everything published should be created with a view toward teaching, learning, and the student path. We can't operate as seeing a distinction between “content for courses” and “content for libraries.”

Connecting Library Content to the Classroom

Typically, when creating new academic content, **Gale** forms and works closely with an advisory board of faculty/scholars/librarians in the field, and faculty will write and peer-review content with us. This approach helps ensure we are creating the type of content that is useful in the classroom.

Content enrichment, including the types of metadata added and the indexing of content, is another essential step in preparing content for multiple uses across campus. By adding metadata fields, our content can be tagged to disciplines, subjects, learning outcomes, and

other useful labels. **Gale** is unique in that we both publish original content and digitize content, and, for both types of content, we have the opportunity upfront to index materials in a way that will yield rich results. We don't only rely on the data supplied to us by partners. Content enrichment is best done as the content is developed, and this process allows us to build products that connect resources in a variety of ways, supporting the learner as he or she seeks additional or related materials.

Tools to ease use are also a part of designing for the classroom from the start. Each course may use a variety of different tools/platforms, so it's important to make it easy to incorporate the desired content into commonly used tools. Even within a campus, instructors may use many different tools. As an example, **Gale's** products integrate with Google Education and Microsoft tools. Users can login to their school or library's **Gale** resources using Google or Microsoft credentials and download, save, and share articles. With nearly 40 million Google Apps for Education users worldwide, partners with such a reach offer a lot of potential to increase library exposure. Separately, our products allow for easy creation of links for use in course readers and Learning Management Systems (LMS), and there are also widgets that can be included in the LMS or LibGuides.

This approach also allows the user of the content — whether faculty or student — to customize the use of it to their specific purpose and preferences — and use it in whatever platform they prefer, mashing it up with other resources useful for teaching and learning. In addition, taking students from the open-web (like Google Scholar — where they may go first) directly into a university's holdings is another way publishers are increasing discoverability and putting library resources in the places where users are looking for information.

Our Philosophy in the Flesh

One of the most recent examples of this approach is our *Gale Researcher* platform and curriculum tool. *Gale Researcher* is designed to help students who may not be comfortable doing college-level research by connecting them to citable scholarly content that is aligned to introductory college courses across a range of disciplines. The content was developed by hundreds of faculty from many different institutions, and each subject area has a chief editor who is also a faculty member. *Gale Researcher* provides access to peer-reviewed

articles and multimedia based on the scope and sequence of introductory college courses. It gives students a simple path to materials that are both topically relevant to an area of study and citable for research projects. Each article has a rich bibliography for further exploration. To help

further develop a student's understanding of the key concepts presented, related articles are suggested and linked from **Gale's Academic OneFile** product and from the library's eBook holdings on GVR. The student can easily branch

from *Gale Researcher* into more traditional library resources such as *Academic OneFile*, a feature which helps them navigate easily through the research and learning process.

Gale Researcher also provides an opportunity for librarians and faculty to collaborate, a key need we saw in the recent **Gale/LJ** survey,¹ by providing a platform that allows the ability to add links to other content of their choosing. Librarians can demonstrate direct support for key courses through tools that allow designated contributors to customize the collection with other content (faculty works, links, and more). In addition, virtually all content within *Gale Researcher* can be shared via a persistent URL, allowing direct access from the LMS or syllabus, which puts the library directly in front of the student.

We know students want this. In the **Cengage Learning** Fall 2015 Engagement Insights survey,² fielded to approximately three thousand higher-ed students, 80% of students said they wish online library resources were easily accessible via their course materials. Integrating into a LMS, syllabus, or e-learning platform puts library content just a click away for students — and they expect content to find them, not the other way around. Unfortunately, only about half of faculty are aware that library services are available through their LMS (Outsell/Against the Grain end user survey, 2014³). Again, more barriers to overcome.

Integrating into the Student Workflow

As a part of global education company **Cengage Learning**, **Gale** is taking classroom integration even further. **Cengage Learning** offers the MindTap e-learning platform across all major disciplines in higher-ed, and **Gale** products such as *Gale Researcher* and *Gale Primary Sources* archives can now be directly linked to a course through MindTap. Instructors can select content from **Gale** library resources for syllabi readings, quizzes, research

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projects, classroom discussions, or other activities. Integration like this allows a university to make the most out of their investment in library resources, drive usage of library materials, and improve student outcomes.

One of our **Gale** employees, who also works as a history professor at **Oakland University** in Michigan, ran an experiment in his classroom to test this theory. **Dr. Dale Prentiss** wanted to develop the critical thinking skills of students in his Colonial U.S. History course, which used MindTap for their e-learning platform. He asked students to analyze depictions of Native Americans and to pin the images and their findings on Pinterest. His students were directed from MindTap to **Gale's Eighteenth Century Collections Online (ECCO)** archive, which the university had recently acquired.

The results were impressive. Archive usage increased 1000% from the previous semester, sessions increased more than 300%, retrievals went up 474%, searches increased over 200%, and minutes in the product were up over 500%. All of this is great for library usage statistics, but, more importantly, students reported better engagement and better understanding of concepts in their post-course surveys. Feedback like this is so important for administrators and stakeholders to truly understand the direct, positive impact the library has on student outcomes and will go a long way in bridging that gap identified in our survey.

OER Use by Faculty and the Role of the Library

All academic institutions are under increasing pressure to show accountability and demonstrate the value they're providing, while also helping to lower the cost of education for students. One area that continues to get a lot of attention is Open Educational Resources

(OER). This is content that is made available under an "open" license for faculty to curate, assemble, and repackage for teaching. This movement presents a unique and important opportunity for libraries, and libraries are becoming more involved in OER initiatives by helping to identify and curate content with faculty.

A recent **Babson** survey⁴ on Educational Resources in U.S. Higher Education collected insights from over 3,000 faculty on how they select the educational material they assign in their courses. According to the survey, most higher education faculty are unaware of open educational resources, but those who are aware are interested with some even willing to give such content a try. Survey results show that OER status is not a driving force in the selection of materials with the most significant barrier being the effort required to find and evaluate such materials.

For those faculty who are aware of OER as an option, they see the following barriers:

- "there are not enough resources for my subject" (49%)
- it is "too hard to find what I need" (48%)
- and "there is no comprehensive catalog of resources" (45%).

The survey report goes on to say that faculty comments "reinforce the idea that cost to the student is important, but only after content, relevance, quality, and presentation have been considered. Cost alone is not sufficient to drive the resource selection."

Library content provides an excellent path to lowering student costs while providing peer-reviewed, well-maintained and consistently updated content. Library material can address the difficulties voiced by faculty on finding needed content. One concern we hear from faculty is the time and effort required to maintain content that is sourced from OER repositories. A strong partnership between

library subject and/or instructional experts and faculty can provide students with an excellent set of content, aligned to course objectives, that is purchased by the library rather than the student, thereby meeting the needs of both students and faculty.

An Opportunity for Libraries to Raise their Profile on Campuses

A recent **Ithaka** survey⁵ found that less than 40% of library directors are actually helping plan curricula at their universities. Thus, there is work to be done to foster more collaboration and communication between librarians and faculty and to elevate the role of the library on campus. **Gale** surely doesn't have all the solutions. But we know there are opportunities to partner with libraries to find new ways to leverage library content, to strengthen the collaboration between faculty and librarians, and most importantly, help libraries empower a better overall learning experience. 🐼

Endnotes

1. Gale/Library Journal "Bridging the Librarian-Faculty Gap" Survey report. <http://lj.libraryjournal.com/downloads/2015-bridging-the-librarian-faculty-gap-in-the-academic-library/>
2. Cengage Learning Fall 2015 Engagement Insights Survey. <http://blog.cengage.com/college-students-reveal-where-they-begin-research/>
3. Outsell/Against the Grain End User Survey. <http://www.against-the-grain.com/2014/05/v26-2-outsell-end-user-study-faculty-and-students/#>
4. Babson Survey "Opening the Textbook: Educational Resources in U.S. Higher Education, 2015-16." <http://www.online-learning-survey.com/reports/openingthetextbook2016.pdf>
5. Ithaka S+R U.S. Library Survey 2013. <http://www.sr.ithaka.org/publications/ithaka-sr-us-library-survey-2013/>

The Affordable Textbook Revolution

by **Robert W. Boissy** (Director of Institutional Marketing and Account Development - Americas, Springer Nature; Phone: 781-244-7918) <Robert.Boissy@SpringerNature.Com>

Two personal events in the Autumn of 2014 led to a turning point for what was at that time **Springer** marketing. The first event was a visit to the Scholarly Communications Interest Group of the New England Chapter of **ACRL**. At that meeting I listened to **Nicole Allen** from **SPARC**, who had for some time previously been involved with Public Interest Research Group activity talk about the negative effects of high textbook costs on student outcomes, with the average textbooks cost per year per student

being \$1200. Shortly after this, my son **James** informed me he had joined the Connecticut Public Interest Research Group (ConnPIRG, <http://connpirg.org/home> and <https://www.facebook.com/TrinityConnPIRG/?fref=ts>) at his College (**Trinity College**, Hartford CT) and that their first program was to push the Higher Education Committee of the Connecticut State Legislature to adopt affordable textbook policies. He and his fellow students testified at the state house to help press their point. They met with success and legislation has



been filed. The affordability of textbooks was clearly an issue not to be ignored.

Most librarians I speak with agree that library-owned resources are definitely part of the open education resources (OER) programs they promote. It occurred to me that even though **Springer**, (since 2015 **Springer Nature**), had enjoyed good uptake of their eBook packages, the very nature of package buying might be hiding useful resources from both faculty and library staff. The truth is that, as of spring 2016, **Springer Nature** has over 3100 e-Textbooks included in its contemporary package offerings. It is true that the former **Springer** tended to publish textbooks outside of the Freshman 101 course category, and for this

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